

MASSACHUSETTS THREATENED PLANTS

LARGE-LEAVED SANDWORT (*Moehringia macrophylla*)

Description

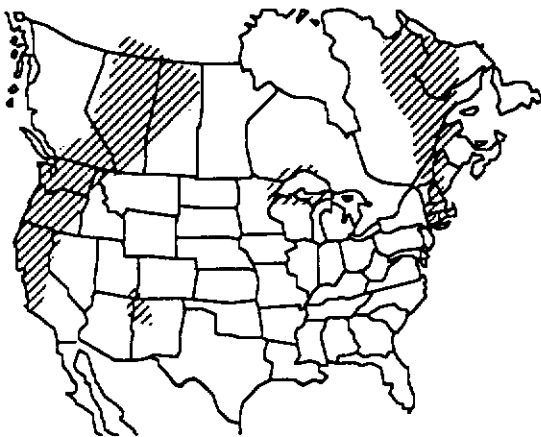
Large-leaved Sandwort, a member of the pink family, is a short (2-6 in., 5-15 cm tall), delicate, perennial herb which grows low to the ground from thin, tough runners in duff or in what little soil is present. Leaves are 1/2-2 inches (2-5 cm) long, 1/8-1/4 inches (3-8 mm) wide, lanceolate or narrowly elliptic, acute to acuminate and glabrous. Stems and peduncles are finely hairy. The white flowers have 5 petals, 5 sepals, 10 stamens, and 3 styles. Petals are distinctly longer than the sepals. In Massachusetts flowering season is from mid-May to mid-June.

Similar Species in Massachusetts

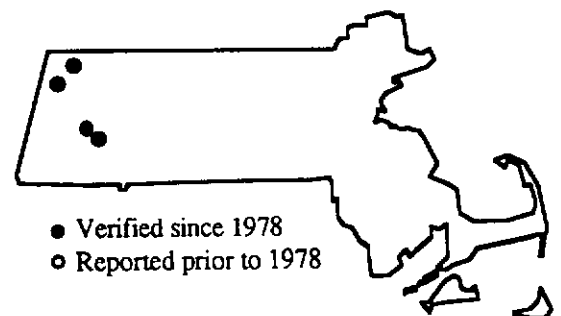
Large-leaved Sandwort bears a resemblance to the common Grove Sandwort (*Moehringia lateriflora*) but can be distinguished by its longer, lanceacuminate, glabrous leaves, by its longer acute sepals, and by its specialized habitat.



Coffin and Phannmuller, eds. Minnesota's Endangered Flora and Fauna University of Minnesota Press 1988.



Range of Large-leaved Sandwort



Massachusetts Distribution by Town

Habitat in Massachusetts

Large-leaved Sandwort is one of our most specialized plants, occurring only on exposed outcrops of serpentine rock. Populations inhabit steep rocky slopes under a broken canopy of White Pine, Black Birch, Red Maple, Hemlock, Striped Maple, and Witch Hazel. Serpentine usually contains high levels of nickel and manganese, which are more or less toxic to plants and therefore severely limit colonization. In Connecticut, Large-leaved Sandwort occurs on a trap rock slope with cold air vents.

Range

Large-leaved Sandwort occurs in four disjunct areas of North America: eastern Quebec and Labrador to Connecticut, around Lake Superior, the southern Rocky Mountains, and in a broad band from Northwest Territories southwestward to Idaho and California.

Population Status

In Massachusetts, Large-leaved Sandwort is listed as "Threatened". Currently (since 1978) 3 occurrences have been recorded. Although each population is large and on very rugged terrain, the extreme rarity of serpentine outcrops in Massachusetts makes it important to protect these few sites.